



City-County of Butte-Silver Bow COMPREHENSIVE PARK, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

Stakeholder Meetings
January-March 2008

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS/FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

During the first two visits to Butte-Silver Bow County the planning team conducted a series of four stakeholder meetings. The purpose of these meetings was to solicit input at the beginning of the process about areas of special interest including tennis, golf, ATV/motorcyclists, and area schools. In addition to these stakeholder meetings a focus group was held specifically to bring the planning team up to date on the existing aquatic facilities and the desire for additional pools and water play in the area. Key findings of these meetings include:

- Additional outdoor aquatics facilities are desired;
- Additional facilities should increase activities and opportunities for youth;
- Pursue making the most of existing community facilities and potential partners; and
- An indoor athletic facility with multiple uses would help spread the cost of operations across multiple user groups.

Summaries of the major points of each meeting are included below.

Aquatics Focus Group

1/17/08

Representatives of many of the major users and providers of aquatics opportunities met with the consulting team to discuss the existing facilities and future needs for pools and other opportunities for water play.

Existing aquatics facilities in the area include:

- Indoor 8-lane lap pool and leisure pool at the new YMCA;
- Indoor and outdoor hot spring pools at Fairmont;
- 6-lane, 25 meter pool at Montana Tech;
- Splash feature (with standing water) at Chester Steele Park;
- Private indoor recreational pool at Butte Country Club; and
- Motel/hotel pools such as the Copper King.

The history of the community's pools focuses on the Stodden Park pool, an outdoor lap and diving pool that had served the community for many years prior to being closed permanently in 2007. The City-County has determined that the age and condition of the pool had passed the point where repairs would be cost effective. During this time, as the YMCA aquatics center was being built the community agreed to contribute the \$40,000 staffing budget previously used to operate the Stodden Park pool to the new facility as a partner.

Several important facts about the YMCA facility operations were mentioned.

- Nine lifeguards are required for open swim, and two have to be on duty any time the pool is open.
- Restructuring the capital debt (in progress) will improve the operating budget.
- Three or four swim meets/events during the summer close the pool to the community.
- It provides year round access to swimming.
- While there is a membership/access fee no resident is turned away due to inability to pay.
- It is difficult to hire enough lifeguards and instructors.
- Additional water aerobics classes could be offered if instructors are available.

Splash Butte, a community led effort to conceptualize and fund construction of a large outdoor aquatics center, was described as including:

- Water slides;
- Wave pool;
- Lazy river;
- Spray features;
- 50 meter competition lap pool; and
- Integrated concessions that could also serve other park features.

The Splash Butte proposal is designed with a Stodden Park location in mind and the facility would occupy approximately 4 acres. The 50 meter pool is a feature that appeals primarily to competitive swimmers, but could be a draw for regional or even national events.

The group also discussed the importance of outdoor aquatics opportunities and the desire to have somewhere to gather and enjoy the limited summer season. In the early design of the YMCA, an outdoor deck and retractable wall was included to serve this desire, but had to be value engineered out due to cost. An additional idea that was discussed was the placement of small water play features in several parks.

Several challenges exist in placing a pool at Stodden Park. The water table is close to the surface and frost heave has caused extensive damage to the closed pool. Also, the groundwater used to fill the pool is extremely cold and expensive to heat to swimming temperatures.

There was a general acknowledgement among the group of the importance of maximizing use of existing facilities and recognizing the ongoing operations costs of aquatics facilities.

Tennis

1/17/08

In discussion with local tennis organization representatives, the planning team reviewed the existing situation for tennis and explored several opportunities that could be explored during the plan.

Existing Facilities and Programs:

- Third year of summer tennis program held at Father Sheehan Park
 - Tripled in size each year
 - Very inexpensive
 - Open to all levels
 - Generates lots of excitement
 - Followed by nine months of inactivity due to weather and lack of indoor courts
- Local tennis association
 - 40 years of history
 - 75+ family memberships
 - City tournament held in second week of August
- Inflatable dome no longer available
 - Cost prohibitive
 - Used for winter tournament last winter
- Other existing courts in town, including Excel and Stayton, need repair or renovation

Opportunities:

- New indoor facility
 - Potentially shared with other user groups
 - Existing organization is not ready for full time staff needed to run an indoor facility
 - Could be modeled after Bozeman (4 courts with lots of insulation)
 - Fee level is likely to be an issue
- Additional development of existing facilities
 - 10 courts, potentially a combination of indoor and outdoor, in the same park would be ideal
- New programming including “Cardio Tennis”

Potential partners identified for tennis facilities include:

- YMCA
- Country Club (which offers a tennis membership but has little space)
- Montana Tech
- School District (connection to schools is important to growing the sport)

Golf

1/18/08

In an interview with several local golfers the planning team reviewed the condition of existing golf courses and issues that should be explored during the plan process.

Stodden Park Golf Course (existing municipal course)

- 9-hole course
- Last modified in the 1970s to speed up play
- Opportunity to expand across the railroad tracks seems to be gone
- Busiest in the morning and early afternoon
- Low cost of play and membership is highly valued
- Good course, well maintained
- Season is generally March 1st - October 31st but varies depending on weather
- A driving range would add a lot to the facility
- There is probably a market for an 18-hole course

One of the main issues at Stodden Park is the clubhouse. The pro shop and social gathering spaces are very small and the limited land makes expanding difficult. Lockers and other amenities are also in need of updating.

Other golf courses in the area include:

- Butte Country Club, which has a new plan to improve the course;
- Old Works;
- Fairmont; and
- Anaconda Country Club.

Schools

3/10/08

Representatives from Butte High School and Butte Central provided details about the schools' use of City-County facilities. Both schools are heavily reliant on City-County and other facilities, including;

- Ball fields;
- Civic Center;
- YMCA Pool; and
- Outdoor tennis courts.

A number of needs were identified:

- Football stadium;
- Indoor tennis courts;
- 18-hole golf course, potentially with a cross country course included;
- Improved field maintenance; and
- Small groups' access to facilities.

ATV/Motorcycle

3/11/08

The planning team interviewed several motorsports enthusiasts to identify issues in Butte-Silver Bow and to better understand the local needs and opportunities.

Key issues include:

- Illegal on-street riding by youth;
- Access, to the edge of the city and to more remote areas;
- Noise, particularly for a facility with lots of users;
- Desire for a flat track for endurance racing; and
- Need for a place focused on young riders.

There are several motorized groups that have different needs and desires.

Motocross

- Smaller part of users
- Facility exists north of Ramsey, considered best in state

Trail riders

- Most of the users in the Butte-Silver Bow area ride on trails
- Need a way for young riders to get from home to the edge of town to access trails
- Big M closed off to motorized use; was a popular area
- Possible sharing of trails (particularly in the winter) as well as potential for user conflict
- ATV riders tend to be slower and more about the scenery
- Bikes are interested in steeper, more challenging terrain

Several sites were discussed including the property behind MCAT, and a site near the landfill near Rocker. The Milwaukee rail right-of-way was also mentioned as a great route out of town toward Thompson Park.